



NEW VENTURES

A NEW VENTURES PRIMER

General Overview

“New Ventures” is what The Alliance Canada calls church planting. But before your focus gets too narrow, New Ventures seeks to support a wide variety of start-up initiatives. While this could involve what one traditionally thinks of when they think of church planting - canvass a neighbourhood, plan a launch Sunday, rent a public hall, etc. - it might also look very different. For example, many New Ventures start with a small evangelistic bible study, a street mission, urban missionaries reaching new neighbourhoods, or cultural/language-based outreaches.

The critical point for New Ventures is this: does the new work, irrespective of how it starts or looks, have the potential to become an autonomous local church in the Alliance at some point in its development?

Where do New Ventures Begin?

Usually, they start as a vision or dream in the heart of a person or group. Sometimes, they start within a church that is dreaming of new things. Regardless, they come to the denomination’s attention at some stage of their journey. Usually, this happens because those with the vision seek our support. As they do so, New Ventures then needs to engage in the process of discernment and assessment. This process is done within each District and led by a New Venture Implementer, an employee of the District. In the case of the Canadian Pacific District (CPD), that Implementer is Andy Lambkin.

Assessing A New Venture

A three-fold rubric guides us in assessing the New Venture:

Vision - What is the vision of the New Venture? Is it a good vision? Do we sense the Holy Spirit’s leading?

Leadership - Does the New Venture catalyst or team have the gifting and capacity to carry out the expressed vision?

Partners - It takes a village to raise a New Venture! Who are the partners - churches, organizations, individuals - that will be involved in supporting this New Venture (Financial, Prayer, oversight)?

Partnership Agreements

Assuming the New Venture clears its assessment, the next step is to formalize the terms of understanding in a partnership agreement. The Implementer drafts the agreement in collaboration with all the partners. It intends to bring clarity to critical matters of concern. For example, the agreement outlines at least the following items:

Vision and Ministry Plan - What is the New Venture seeking to do, and how does it plan to do this?

Financial Terms - What finances are required (budget), and what amount can the partners provide (income)?

Ministry Needs - Does the New Venture require space or equipment?

Communications - What is expected of the New Venture regarding reporting to the varied partners?

Terms - How long is the commitment for, and what are the renewal options, if any? Usually, partnership agreements are for one-year terms renewed annually as part of a review process. The one-year terms allow all partners to take this journey one step at a time.

The Lead Partner

As we work through the assessment and draft a partnership agreement, one of the critical steps is locating a partner church that will assume a lead role. We need a partner church to provide legal and fiduciary oversight for the New Venture and its official worker(s). Essentially, what this means is that until the New Venture can form its board and establish its charitable status (or until the term of the partnership agreement expires):

- The New Venture worker(s) would serve as an employee of the local church - with proper notices of employment, job descriptions and oversight (based on the terms outlined in the partnership agreement).
- All funds donated to the New Venture would be channelled through that same church.

To help envision this, the lead partner church could understand the New Venture like any of its staff and ministries. Like a youth pastor is employed by a church to lead a ministry, so is the New Venture worker. And just as that youth ministry has a budget approved by the board and membership, so does the New Venture. And just as that youth pastor is provided a job description that is reviewed regularly, so is the New Venture worker.

The differences come, however, in the focus of the New Venture and the role the other partners play. Unlike a youth ministry, the New Venture is exclusively focused on launching its New Venture in the hopes of establishing a local church. Their work is solely outward-focused and is not for the primary benefit of the partner church. And, whereas the budget for the youth ministry comes exclusively from the church, with a New Venture, there can be other churches, persons or organizations that are providing critical supports.

The Role of the CPD

At this point, a church might rightly ask, “Why doesn’t the CPD play this lead role?” That’s a good question for which there are two answers:

- First, it gives the local church a front-row opportunity to participate in the launch of a potential new church. This can give the church a wonderful work to celebrate, pray for and nurture.
- Second, and more pragmatically, it helps the CPD share the load. We don’t have the internal capacity to provide proper legal accountability to multiple projects. When we embed a New Venture in a local church, it enables that board and lead pastor to assume this critical role.

So, what does the CPD do to support a New Venture if not the lead partner or the employer? Here are some of the critical parts we play:

Assessment - Using the rubric above, we assess the potential New Venture and its leadership.

Licensing - We vet the leaders and, as with all workers in the Alliance, we provide them with a license for working as an official worker within the denomination.

Securing Partners - We seek to help find the “village” that supports the New Venture.

Partnership Agreements - We draft all partnership agreements. Additionally, each year we review the agreement before any renewal. If the project does not seem to be advancing, we arrange to conclude the agreement in collaboration with the other partners.

Communication - We help share the New Venture story provincially and nationally.

Reporting - We oversee a formal reporting process required of all New Venture leaders. These reports are distributed to all partners.

Finances - We often contribute finances that support the New Venture leaders with their salary and resources to attend district events.

Coaching - We support the NV workers through regular meetings.

Summary

New Ventures are one of the most exciting developments in the recent history of the Alliance in Canada. We have more than 50 New Ventures across the country, representing a wide array of ministry models and focus. God is undoubtedly raising a new church with new leaders to reach a new Canada. But these new expressions do not happen apart from the consistent and faithful support of the established churches. Just like in every arena of life, the wisdom and strength of the “mature” is needed to help bring life to the “young.”

We’re grateful that your church is contemplating the role it might play in this process of raising a New Venture.